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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JEFF MERKLEY, a Senator from the State of Oregon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Help us, O Lord, to run when we can, to walk when we ought, and to wait when we must.

Today, give wisdom to our lawmakers. May they leave undone that for which they are not ready as they open their minds to discern Your will. Lord, help them to not pray for tasks fitted for their strength but for strength which fits them for their tasks. Conform their lives more and more to Your likeness. Continue to lift the light of Your countenance upon them and fill them with Your peace.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JEFF MERKLEY led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 10, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JEFF MERKLEY, a Senator from the State of Oregon, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MERKLEY thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business. Senators will be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each. There will be no rollcall votes during today's session of the Senate.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, many Americans are fortunate to have health insurance to help them pay for their prescriptions, treatments, or even doctor visits. Like any kind of insurance, we hope we never have to use it, but it is comforting to know it is there. But what happens if the system designed to give us that sense of security and stability is not itself secure or stable? Where does one turn when that certainty is taken away? That is the fear too many middle-class families in America have. They see the jobs around them disappear. For some, one of those jobs may be their own job. They see their paychecks get smaller, or they struggle each week because that paycheck simply does not go far enough. They may have insurance today, but they don't know if they will be able to say the same tomorrow.

Too many families in the greatest country and the largest economy in the world, by far, live just one illness or one accident or one pink slip away from losing that sense of security—their health insurance.

Far too many families have to make a decision when their children get sick:

Do they buy them new school supplies or do they buy them clothes? Do they buy some extra groceries for the family or are they going to be able to take them to the doctor? As I say, do they get them new clothes when they grow out of their old ones or do they get the treatment they need to stay healthy or even to get healthy? Far too many hard-working Americans have to make a choice when their doctor gives them a prescription for chronic illness, or what insurance companies like to call a preexisting condition. Do they get that medicine or do they add that little piece of paper to a top of a mounting pile of bills they cannot afford to pay?

What about small businesses, those entrepreneurs in big cities and small towns that innovate, invent, and fuel our economy? They do have a choice to make. Do they hire new employees? Do they lay off more hard-working Americans or do they just simply cancel their health insurance for their employees because it is too expensive? Businessmen and businesswomen do not have a lack of insurance because they are cheap or they do not care about their employees, they do not have health insurance because they cannot afford it. It is too expensive.

Taking your child to the doctor, filling a prescription, and giving your workers health insurance should not have to be choices. They should not end in question marks. That is exactly why we are working to bring stability and security back to health care. Health care reform means making sure every American can afford access and care. Reform means making sure that if you lose your job, your health care will not go with the job you have lost. It means if you change jobs, your health care stays with you. Reforming health care means that if your mother had breast cancer or you had minor surgery last year or your kid gets allergies every spring, your insurance company cannot say: I am sorry, you are just too much of a risk for us to

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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cover anymore. Health care reform means lowering the cost of care and keeping it low. It means improving the quality of care you get and keeping the quality high. It means that premiums you pay every month will not go up just because your insurance company feels as if they should.

Senator PATTY MURRAY of Washington told a story. I was at an event with her yesterday. She got up yesterday morning to find in the Washington press an insurance company that insures 135,000 Washingtonians will have a 17.5-percent increase immediately in their health insurance premiums. That is an average. Some are higher, some are lower. Reform means the premiums you pay every month will not go up just because your insurance company feels like it. It means keeping costs stable so the price of staying healthy does not fluctuate like a gallon of gas. It not only means making sure you can keep going to your family doctor or keep your health care plan if you like it but also that you can afford to do so.

No one can predict when the next accident might come, when one might get laid off. We don't know when we will get sick or when one of our loved ones will get sick. But we can put people in control of their own health care.

A doctor's first job when someone comes into the emergency room is to stabilize the patient. When it comes to addressing the emergency care in our health system, our job is to do the same—stabilize it. We have to cure the uncertainty in health care. We must fix our broken health care system so that when you open your medicine cabinet, you can be certain the prescription you need to get better will be there. When you open your wallet, you should be certain you can afford to go to the doctor. And when you open that small business in your hometown, you can be certain you can hire employees to grow your company, put your ideas into motion, realize your American dream, and have your employees covered with health insurance.

The status quo is ruining our country's financial stability. Right now, one-sixth of every dollar spent in America goes for health care. If we do not change this, by the year 2020—that is a little over 10 years away—it will be 35 cents of every dollar spent will be on health care. It will bankrupt our country. We must change this.

I ask my Republican colleagues: Let's not make this a partisan issue. Let's work together. That is why I so appreciated a number of valiant Republicans on the Finance Committee working together to try to come up with a health care plan that can be supported by Democrats and Republicans in the Senate. We can do it alone. Democrats can do it alone. We do not want to do it alone because it would be under something we call reconciliation, and it changes the rules. And instead of being able to do a large amount of health care, we are only going to be able to do a little health

care. We want to work with our Republican colleagues. This is not a partisan issue. People losing their health care are not Democrats, Republicans, or Independents; they are Americans, whether from the State of Oregon or the State of Nevada.

The Presiding Officer represents the State of Oregon. There is extremely high unemployment in Oregon, higher than in Nevada, and we are over 11 percent. In 1 month, we went from 10.4 percent to 11.3 percent unemployment. So the people losing their jobs, losing their health care in Oregon and Nevada and all the rest of the States are not partisans. They want something done to restore their jobs, to get them new jobs, and to give them health insurance, if they do not have it, and make sure it is not taken away from them.

I reach out to my Republican colleagues to join with us in this necessity of doing something about health care. This is not something we are looking for work to do. We are doing it because it is absolutely essential. Right now, I repeat, one-sixth of every dollar spent goes to health care in America. If we do not change this, in just a few years it will be 35 cents of every dollar. We cannot sustain that.

Mr. President, it is my understanding you are going to open morning business.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I wish to note, in the context of my remarks, the announcement yesterday that the deficit for the first 9 months of this year is now \$1.1 trillion, headed for, at the end of this year, \$1.8 trillion, perhaps the highest percentage of GDP in the history of this country outside of wartime. We are now in the process of adding amendment after amendment in the HELP Committee without any idea of the cost. As one of my colleagues who proposed a massive expansion of women's health care yesterday said in

the committee: It is not the cost that is important; it is the cause. A remarkable approach to the fact that we are mortgaging our children and grandchildren's futures in a fashion which is the commission of generational theft.

Chairman DODD received a new score on his bill last week by hiding the real cost of the bill. A few weeks ago, the preliminary cost was over \$1 trillion. Now it is at \$900 billion—same bill, just different numbers. On the one hand, we are told reform is urgent and, at the same time, they don't implement the bill for 4 years; conveniently, after the next Presidential election. Then they will tax employers with a job-killing employer health mandate, collect \$52 billion from small employers, the engine that will take us out of our recession. Nobody disagrees about the role of small business in our economy. Then this latest proposal hides the cost of the additional hundreds of billions of dollars of Medicaid expansion.

The State of California is offering IOUs to pay their bills. They have a \$26 billion deficit. We are going to increase Medicaid's burden on the States to the tune, in the case of California, of several more billion dollars. How are they going to pay for it? It is an impossible task.

I am told that is not about the cost, but it is about the cost. Just as the stimulus package was about the cost, just as the continued bailout of industries such as the automotive industry, banks, financial institutions and anybody who is "too big to fail," when small business people all over America are closing their doors because they are too small to save.

For the first 9 months, the deficit is \$1.1 trillion. That is \$800 billion greater than the deficit recorded last year. The American people have a right to know what this health care bill will cost, what it will cost now and what it will cost our grandchildren.

The Washington Post today tells us how not to reform health care, in opposing the government insurance President Obama now says is so critical. According to today's Washington Post:

... it would be tragic if this issue were to drag down health reform or make it impossible to secure Republican votes. Restructuring the health-care system is risky enough that Democrats would be wise not to try to accomplish it entirely on their own.

I certainly hope my friends on the other side of the aisle pay attention to that comment. It has turned into a partisan effort, and it is too bad.

From today's Wall Street Journal, "Democrats Hoodwinked the Health Lobby. Americans's health-care CEOs are being taken for a ride by Congress and their own lobbyists."

It is a very interesting article by Kimberly Strassel.

The industry's calculation is that by cutting deals, it can set the terms of its contributions to "reform" and even wangle up-sides. The insurers came first, promising to squeeze \$2 trillion in costs out of the system. Democrats are letting Ms. Ignagni believe